



Photography: Benjamin Margalit

The modifications provided by North Coast Accessible Homes include no-step entries, accessible electrical controls, extra-wide hallway doors, barrier-free showers, ramps and lever-style handles on doors and faucets. (Pictured above is Mary Namy with North Coast's Mike Stafford.)

Accessibility at *Home*

North Coast Accessible Homes *opens the door to aging in place—safely, independently and comfortably.*

by Adam Cook

The mobility issues of age, health and disability create a housing dilemma—one we all will face, either for ourselves or for a family member. On one hand, nursing homes provide safety. On the other, we cherish our independence and the comfort of our own homes. We want what's best, but there is no easy answer. Most of us would prefer to stay in our homes for as long as possible.

North Coast Accessible Homes opens the door to aging in place—safely, independently and comfortably.

As a first step to removing the barriers of aging in place, North Coast Accessible Homes provides no-charge, in-home Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS) assessments. "A lot of people don't realize they have issues, until you walk with them," says Mike Stafford, North Coast Accessible Homes' director of accessibility. "They'll hold on to the doorframe to get themselves onto the step without realizing it."

Mike's checklist includes no-step entries, accessible electrical controls, extra-wide hallway doors, barrier-free showers, ramps and lever-style handles on doors and faucets.

Modifications close at hand are often overlooked, he says.

"Grab bars are a very inexpensive. It may look like a towel rack, but it can support 500 pounds of weight," says Mike. "Switching out doorknobs for lever-style handles is an easy thing. Trip hazards are another thing—carpets and rugs are a real hazard. The smallest, simplest, most inexpensive modifications make a big difference in the quality of people's lives."

After North Coast Accessible Homes made a few accessibility modifications to her Parma home earlier this year, Fay Sywyj has this to say, "This is really a blessing. I can get around my house so much easier. I should have done this 20 years ago."

Some modifications are less simple, and aging in place has become part of a growing trend toward universal design, a generalized approach that incorporates features adaptable to age and changing needs. Some people want to stay in their homes and are looking ahead well past retirement; others are considering family members with compromised mobility.

The concept of universal design is not new. For more than 30 years, North Coast Accessible Homes' parent company, North Coast Community Homes, has developed and maintained hundreds of homes throughout Northeast Ohio for people with developmental disabilities.

"It was our desire to translate our expertise in providing accessibility modifications for people with developmental disabilities to people who are getting older, want to stay at home or don't want to go into a nursing home," says Dick Russ, North Coast Community Homes' vice president of resource development. "We wanted to expand our services, whether age related or disability related."

One woman, Mary Namy, in particular, was the impetus and the inspiration to increase North Coast Community Homes' impact.

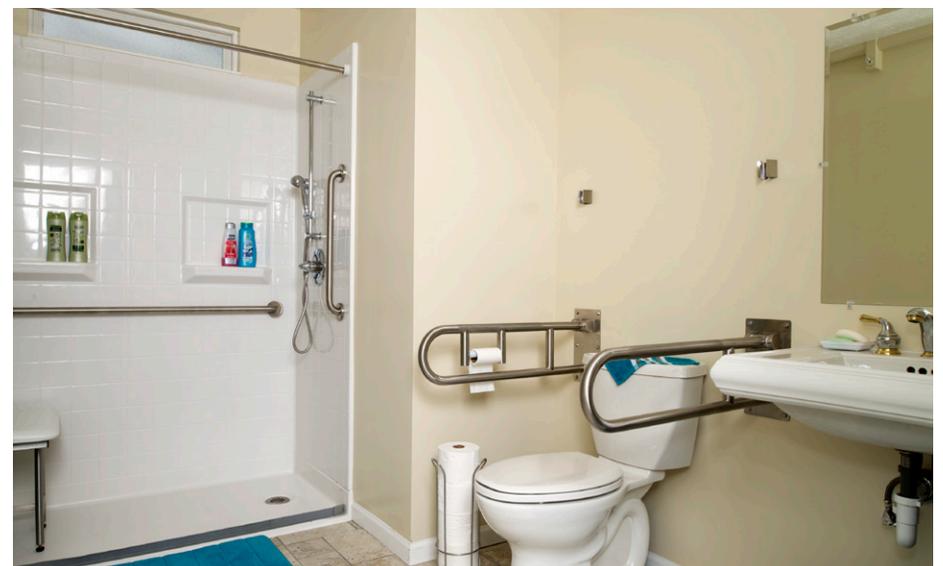
Mary lives with multiple sclerosis (MS), and had lived in a nursing home for two years. "I knew I didn't want to spend the rest of my life there," she says.

Mary reached out to North Coast Community Homes and is now thriving, along with her two roommates who also live with MS, in a beautiful, fully accessible, private lakeside residence in Euclid.

"We figured if we can provide accessibility modifications for people who are really challenged, and help them gain their independence, then we can do that for anybody," Dick says.

When asked how she feels since leaving the nursing home, Mary smiles and points to a sign hanging above the couch that says, "Heaven is a little closer in a home by the water."

North Coast Accessible Homes is located at 14221 Broadway Ave., in Cleveland, and online at AdaptMyHome.com. Open the door to a no-charge, in-home assessment by calling 216-365-2614.



As part of its service, North Coast Accessible Homes provides each client with a free, in-home, Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist assessment.

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—Fay Sywyj